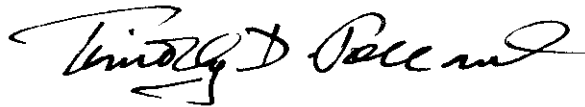


**Can I Have a Take Three?:
A Retrospective Look at My Work in Student Television**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy D. Pollard", written in a cursive style.

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Abstract

Experience has always been the buzzword around the Telecommunications Department at Ball State University, and that vital experience could be found outside of the classroom as well as inside. During my four years of working on the student produced television show *Take Two*, I have learned many necessary aspects of television production. With my last year at Ball State University spent as the executive producer, director, and editor of this movie review show, I logged hour upon hour of experience. I will pass on tips and advice that I wish I had heard when I started working on *Take Two*, and hopefully other students who want to produce television programs will hear my voice of experience.

Acknowledgements

- Many thanks go to Mr. Tim Pollard, my advisor for this paper and for *Take Two*. His incredible patience and understanding were a welcome relief and nice contrast to my stressed and scattered self.
- My parents deserve special thanks for their constant support and encouragement. Even though I never took her up on her offer, my mother's reminders that she would still love me even if I got a C were always reassuring to hear.
- Without the following people, there would be no *Take Two* or this thesis. The wonderful members of this year's *Take Two* crew include: Rich Abbott, Ana Carter, Julian Dalrymple, Ashley Dobbin, Caitlin Ertel, Al Harley, Allison Hartung, Sam Jackson, Meagan King, Amanda Lents, Rob Lohr, Jamie Long, Diann Maurer, Matthew Mumper, Katie Nathan, Nathan Nobbe, Dee Nocero, Jared Phillips, Charley Pond, Jeremy Sage, and Jerron Spencer.

Two thumbs up? Four stars? The feel good movie review show of the year? If I had to give *Take Two* a review, what would I say about the show? In honor of college, maybe I would use the letter grading system. Looking back on my four years working with *Take Two*, there are many things that I feel deserve the glowing review. However, there are also those elements of the show that rightfully deserve to be panned. Throughout my time with the show, I have learned many aspects of student produced television shows, and my hope with this paper is to share my knowledge. The pieces of advice I am about to share are by no means carved in stone as every show, every producer, and every taping can be unpredictable. This paper exists to teach any other student producer that happens upon it the lessons I have learned from my personal experiences with *Take Two*. If you read only one thesis paper on student produced television shows, make it this one.

History of the World: Part I

About four years ago, I walked into the tryouts for *Take Two*, fully prepared to volunteer myself as a member of the crew. *Take Two* is a show consisting of movie reviews and movie news, and auditions were being held for host positions. Somehow, before I knew it, I was in front of the classroom talking about *The Thomas Crown Affair*. Having had no previous performance experience in front of a camera, I was expecting to never find myself in that position again. I had resigned myself to happily work behind the camera, doing whatever it was that crew members did. My high school did not have a television station or radio station like other high schools so I was eager to get any experience I could. My love of television and movies had brought me to the

Telecommunications Department at Ball State University, and that love would serve me well during my time with *Take Two*.

Needless to say, I was shocked, amazed, stunned, and about one hundred other adjectives when I found out I was going to be on camera on *Take Two*. My assignment for the show was to review the movies featured at the University Film Series. A panel of faculty, students, and community members selected the movies shown, and the movies were generally a little less mainstream than the ones at the local cinema. Appearing on the screen were silent films, foreign films, black and white films, documentaries, and other features. Every other week or so, I would join the odd mix of students required to attend, one or two faculty members, true film enthusiasts, and a surprising number of elderly people in Pruis Hall to watch whatever the film committee deemed worthy to be shown. Then, at that week's taping of *Take Two*, I would give my synopsis and review of the film of the week. For three years I did this, and I learned a couple of things from my experiences. One, Liza Minnelli in *Cabaret* is not my favorite person. (That's the nice way of stating my feelings.) Two, I needed more. Never content to taking the easy road, I jumped at any chance to be a camera operator, floor director, technical director, or whatever other position needed to be filled. This led to my most recent positions that would consume my senior year at Ball State.

For the last year, I have held the triumvirate of television positions at *Take Two*. I have been the triple threat of executive producer, director, and editor. While officially being named producer last year, I was essentially drafted into the other two positions due to a lack of interest from anyone else. In my final year of the show, I have seen two

different versions of *Take Two*. During the fall semester, the crew and on air people were older, more experienced students. Most of the staff had been working on *Take Two* for at least one previous semester, and they had also completed several of the required production classes through the TCOM Department. Working on a television show was not a new experience, and they were not as clueless as I was during my first semester working on *Take Two*.

The spring semester, however, was an entirely different story. The three hosts of the fall semester had moved on to internships, movies, and the real world. Only about four of the crew members from the fall semester were returning in the spring, and only half of those people were reliable enough to show up each and every week. I brought all of the positive energy I could to the TCOM SuperParty in order to get some new, fresh people on *Take Two*. I feel I succeeded in this aspect because the show gained four new hosts and several new crew people.

I found that one of the hardest parts of being the producer was selecting the new hosts. I tried to be as supportive as I could when telling the students that they had not been selected as hosts. I've had four wonderful years at *Take Two*, and I have never held the host position. I wanted to make sure that the students knew that just because they did not get the position they had auditioned for that they were not excluded from participating with the rest of the show. Unfortunately, only two people who tried out and did not get a host position came back to the show. Fortunately, those two have found their own niche segments in the form of a mob genre segment and a director spotlight segment. Even though I did not have a high retention rate from the first meeting of the spring semester, I

was able to recruit new hosts and several new crew people. With the new *Take Two* cast and crew, my final semester turned out to be a hectic, valuable, fun, and creative experience.

Mommie Dearest (or Adventures in Babysitting)

While the credits may have listed me as a producer, director, and editor, they could just have easily covered those jobs with the title of “Mom.” For the last year, particularly the last semester, I was essentially a mother of ten to twelve. I was constantly reminding and straightening and cleaning and basically keeping house. Each week I would send out an email to the staff to remind them of Tuesday’s taping. (I would also send the emails to those who tried out for host but did not return after learning the results of the auditions. I wanted to encourage them to come back. Again, I was doing something motherly.) I always felt that the email was sort of a backup reminder just in case people were really busy with schoolwork. However, I learned by listening to my staff that the email was a vital part of attendance. People said that they checked their email accounts to be sure that the show was taping that night. Before hearing this, I had no idea that the staff was so reliant on the emails, but the responses prove that the crew, particularly the freshmen, needed that constant reminder week after week.

As another aspect of my stereotypical motherly duties, I would have to keep track of everyone’s movie watching habits. Each week of the fall semester, the hosts would discuss three movies. Each host would see two movies and talk about each with another host. The films would be either thematic, like films featuring James Dean or pictures to watch in honor of Halloween, or the movies would be recent theater releases. In the spring

semester, I decided to experiment with four hosts. I had two hosts talk about one movie, the other two hosts talk about another movie, and then all four hosts discuss one picture or several as a sort of panel discussion. Again, the movies were recent releases or related by theme, such as sports films or bad movies.

Part of planning each show included creating the theme for each particular week. In the fall semester I received a lot of input from my hosts because they had very strong interests in cinema. (Each host actually picked an actor or director and devoted a show to him or her. The David Lynch Special worked out especially well.) Finding themes that four hosts could agree on during the spring semester was much more difficult. It was also difficult to plan shows when hosts unexpectedly did not show up to the tapings for various reasons or if one host did not see the movie he or she had previously agreed to see. I would often find myself asking one host what movies he or she saw that fit a particular topic, and then I would question the next host in an effort to find commonly viewed films. This kind of organization seemed reminiscent of a mother having to drive one child to soccer practice and then trying to get another child to ballet. Somehow, among the different movie viewing histories, links would need to be created in order to film a show just as times would have to be arranged to accommodate the different children's schedules. Again, motherly instincts would be a beneficial trait to have when producing a television show.

Aside from the email reminders and organizational quirks, I would find myself asking the crew if anyone left his or her jacket in the studio. I would have to remind my hosts to take off their lanyards or to put the microphone wire behind them. It was a version

of that last minute motherly touch up to the hair or straightening of the tie. Watch and study mothers or other caregivers because they most likely have boundless patience and intelligence. While running a television show is not nearly the task of raising children for at least eighteen years, producers have a similar role to caregivers. They are responsible for numerous people, and they certainly want their children or crew to look clean and respectable. While I did not catch every spot of dirt on my crew's faces, I tried to keep the encouragement flowing.

Sleepless in Seattle

While my family, friends, roommate, and professors have certainly provided me with encouragement and strength during my last semesters at Ball State, there is really only one man that truly stands out from the crowd. His name: Mr. Coffee. As ashamed as I am to admit it, coffee has been the source of energy that I have relied on most heavily this past year. When producing a television show and attempting to excel in 15 to 18 hours of class each semester, something had to give. For me, that something was sleep. This section is by no means any sort of complaint about the lack of sleep that I received because I am happiest when I am busiest. However, living on 3 hours of sleep a night does not exactly lend itself to a fully functioning Beth (particularly for those 9 a.m. courses). Therefore, the regular boost of coffee was necessary to be at an optimal note-taking performance level.

I do not feel comfortable advocating the use of coffee to survive life because there are certainly healthier beverages. (A glass of water, anyone?) As I will be addressing later in this paper, there are steps to take to avoid the caffeine addiction. However, if you need something to perk you up, remember that coffee can be your friend. If not coffee, then

pick your own caffeine-infused poison. (I am also partial to plain M&M's from the vending machine.)

Maring-Hunt: or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Muncie Public Library System

This portion might be valuable to only those producing shows like *Take Two*, but having a library card to the Muncie Public Library System has been a great asset to my work. Often I would find myself at the editing computer with footage from Tuesday's taping, and the footage would only last 12-15 minutes. This can be quite a problem when producing a half-hour television program. I found ways to stretch a show, like a producer's note at the end or promos for the next week's show. However, the most efficient and least obvious way to fill time was with movie clips. Not only did this help with time, clips also added more depth to the show. The clips can give the audience an idea of what a movie is like, the hosts can illustrate a point about a film by showing a clip, and clips add variety to the images the audience is watching.

During the fall semester, the hosts were always very conscientious about giving me clips to use. They would seek out the videos themselves to ensure that the movies they were talking about would be represented. During the spring semester, the hosts were not as resourceful. If they owned the movie discussed on the show, the film was often in DVD format. I could only take clips from VHS due to the editing system so I would have to seek out VHS copies of the films. I often found these in one of the many Muncie library branches. The library provided a free and easy way to legitimately fill time on the show, and the selection at the libraries is truly impressive. On occasion, I would even check out a

book or a video to enjoy in my spare time. My public library card proved to be a valuable asset to producing *Take Two*.

The Graduate

There are several aspects of my roles as executive producer, editor, and director that I both regret doing and regret not doing. One of these is forcing myself to work up to the last possible minute of the semester. By the end of the school year, I should have attended *Take Two* tapings as a more passive member than as my original dictatorial self. This action would have served two very important purposes. First, it would allow my replacement producer to have a chance to do what he will be doing next year, but he would have an added advantage. I would be there to provide support and knowledge, and if he had any questions or issues, I would be there to answer or correct them. If the previous producer before myself had allowed me to, in a sense, practice being producer and director, I would have had more confidence when I walked into the control room on my own at the beginning of this year. Unfortunately, I did not think ahead as I should have, and the opportunity was lost.

Another reason to hand over the controls earlier would be to give myself a break. I had many loose ends to tie up since this was my last semester on campus, and the numerous senior projects piled up during the month of April. *Take Two* turned out to be another item on my to do list, and the show was overshadowed by term papers and major exams. If I had allowed next year's producer to produce at the end of this semester, my personal workload would have been lessened. To make this point seem less selfish than it sounds, *Take Two* may have been put together a little more professionally by someone who

was going to be at Ball State next year. The programs I was churning out between study sessions and typing papers and editing did not receive a lot of my creative energy, and I think I performed a disservice to the students who were not experiencing senioritis.

I can remember past producers of *Take Two* seeming a bit less enthusiastic at the end of the year, and I now completely understand the reasons behind that sluggish feeling. If only a handful of people showed up at the tapings, one producer would very quickly move to cancel the taping. I would be appalled that the taping would be cancelled for the night, and I did not understand why I was the only one who felt that way. Now I do. Taking the night off from taping would allow a few extra hours to study or to work on another project. Not having an episode to edit would clear a lot of time on the weekends for other priorities. If a younger student had been in control during April, the show would have had an enthusiastic producer, and that was a role I could not fill myself any longer.

The Replacements

Always have a backup plan. At numerous times, I would find myself trying to create a new show topic because one of the hosts did not fulfill his or her responsibility to see a particular movie. The last show of the year was supposed to be about summer movies, like *Summer Rental* or *National Lampoon's Vacation*. Due to extenuating circumstances, this topic was not going to work out with the hosts. Miraculously being quick on my feet, I managed to create a new theme that probably worked out better than the original idea. (The hosts discussed movies that would feature sequels in the coming summer months.) Often I would have to alter the show's intended theme to accommodate unplanned situations.

This sort of problem also suggests that flexibility is very important. As wonderful as one idea is, it may not come to fruition exactly as planned due to outside forces. This paper is one example of the need to stay open to change as I originally intended to submit a DVD of *Take Two* episodes as my Honors thesis. Unfortunately, there were audio problems that could not be rectified in the time I had remaining to complete the project. Therefore, I moved on to Plan B, which turned out to be this paper. While I would have loved to finish the DVD or to have used any of the original ideas I had for different episodes, changes to my plans were necessary to make. Flexibility on original ideas and openness to quick, unavoidable changes are two key ingredients to a television producer's role. While a rough plan or agenda is essential when taping a television show, the ability to alter that plan is also a vital part of producing.

The idea of being prepared for change is linked to the idea of simply being prepared in general. I arrived to each taping with my essential items: batteries for the microphones, a videotape to record the show, and a rough outline of what I expected to tape that night. Although the last item did not always play an integral role in *Take Two*, the batteries and tape were certainly important. Remember the small things because they could be large in importance.

Sophie's Choice

Here is the one piece of advice that I wished I had followed: Delegation is the most important aspect of being in charge. Being producer should not mean that you have to do everything yourself. Being producer means that it is your responsibility to make sure everything is done. Foolishly, I did not follow this advice and somehow felt that it was my

job to direct the show, edit the show, fill time when the show did not run for thirty minutes, brainstorm ideas for show topics, design a website, write a radio commercial for the show, attend all necessary management meetings, and take care of other important duties. I think this mentality occurred due to a mix of my need for control and to apathetic feelings on the part of the *Take Two* staff.

After having hosts not show up for tapings or having people not bring any particular props that they said they would bring, I lost any trust I had for the staff. I knew that if there was something essential that had to be done for the show, I would have to do it myself. I would not have been able to relax if I had given the videotape from the taping to one of my crew members. I would constantly be worried about the person losing the tape, taping over the show footage, or doing something else to damage the chances of producing a new show. Part of me knows mistakes and accidents happen, but another part of me knows that it would be best if I was the one who made the mistakes. I could then be angry with myself and not be angry at anyone on my staff for something that could have happened to anyone on the crew. Instead of making the mistakes of taping over a show or losing a tape, I made the mistake of not giving my staff opportunities. I did not give everyone a chance due to the immature, irresponsible actions of others, and I paid for that mistake by convincing myself that it was my duty to do everything.

I felt responsible for every aspect of the show, and when I did not complete everything I wanted to do for the show, I felt an incredible sense of guilt. Every week I would remind myself that *Take Two* absolutely needed a website and that I was the only one who could make it. Every week, however, I would also remind myself of the other

responsibilities I had to fulfill for professors, classes, and my own well being. There is not enough coffee in the world that could have propelled me to complete everything I wanted to accomplish. My lack of trust gave *Take Two* the lack of a website, a radio commercial, and sleep for the producer.

My main concern with the staff of the spring semester was the experience level. Since most of the students were freshmen or sophomores, they did not have the editing experience I had or the shooting experience I did. Also, college is definitely an adjustment from high school. I probably would have felt very uncomfortable taking on any major responsibilities for *Take Two* during my freshman year. I just wanted to get my feet wet; I did not want to dive in the deep end. Asking a freshman that is still adjusting to the college lifestyle to edit a show on a system he or she just learned would be a foolish mistake. I remembered my days as a freshman, and I assumed that the rest of the crew would not want immediate immersion in production and editing.

However, even with this untrusting attitude on my part, there was a strong sense of apathy that I felt from the crew. I would ask people for ideas for a radio commercial to air on WCRD, and I would never get a response. I would ask for show topics, and the only response I heard was from a host who wanted to talk about a specific movie. The host would not have a theme built around the movie he or she wanted to talk about; he or she just knew that a particular movie should be reviewed. It was left to me to construct some sort of theme based on one single film. (The sports movie show was constructed around one host who desperately wanted to discuss *Baseketball*.) I certainly did not mind letting the hosts talk about movies they enjoyed, but I was very frustrated with getting little or no

input from the staff. The hosts thought in terms of movies while I thought in terms of entire shows.

The end of year video for the TCOM Banquet is one very specific and recent example of apathy. The video probably should have been a group effort, but for *Take Two*, it was not. For weeks I practically begged the staff to think of anything we could do to fill a minute of video to air in front of other telecommunications students and faculty. I even suggested that the group could do some sort of movie parody. I never received an email from anyone, and no one ever approached me with an idea. I understand that everyone has other projects and assignments to work on for other responsibilities, but I also could have used some input from the staff. I like feedback and constructive criticism for my own ideas, but I received none from my staff. My idea was the one approved because it was the only idea on the table. Once again, I was left to create something from nothing.

I'll be perfectly honest. I saw the other student groups' videos, and I was jealous. They were funny, nicely constructed, and probably a group effort. *Take Two's* video may have appeared that way, but it certainly was not. Since I was producer, I had to form some sort of plan for the video, and I had to make sure *Take Two* was represented at the Banquet. The responsibility fell to me, and I did the best I could. Perhaps by the end of the semester everyone was already used to me doing everything, and they may have thought that there was no reason to worry about the video. Why waste time thinking of something when Beth will do it? Early in the spring semester I should have established different rules. I should have pushed harder and encouraged more strongly for people to get involved in the aspects of the show outside of the Tuesday night taping. I did not want

to turn *Take Two* into a class with rules, though, so I presented *Take Two* as a very laid-back television show. Unfortunately, I ended up paying for that relaxed atmosphere by being the only person taking the show seriously. In retrospect, I should have been more stringent in what I expected from the staff, and I should have shared the wealth of responsibilities among the group.

The Perfect Storm

Hope and pray for good weather even though, unfortunately, weather is something that people cannot control. If I somehow gained the magic power to control weather, Muncie would have experienced an entirely different winter. The weather added unnecessary worry and bleakness to my already hectic life. Thinking back on the early months of the spring semester, I wonder if it is possible to officially change the 2003 semester's name to be referred to as a winter semester. From the first day of the new semester to the Friday before spring break, the weather was miserable. The university proved that miracles do indeed occur when they declared a snow day on one particularly bad Monday in January. One snow day was not enough to reverse the effects of the snow, the ice, and the freezing temperatures that had combined to create a painfully depressing semester. I will recount the following embarrassing story in order to let anyone who may be facing a tough winter know that he or she is not the only frustrated person.

I was walking to class with a friend, and we were maneuvering our way around the various ice patches on campus. At one point, I slipped a little on the ice, but fortunately I did not fall down. My friend, being very kind, asked if I was okay. I yelled, "Of course I'm not okay. The snow is making me crazy." I think we were both surprised at my

— volume and my intensity with such a statement. I had reached a breaking point with the reverse hell of coldness that consumed Muncie for months.

This section has little to do with television production, but the weather played a role in my position at *Take Two*. I would often find myself frustrated with the weather, and I would walk into a taping with a frozen body and a short temper. I tried to remain as calm and peaceful as possible, but I could sense that my patience was running thin. It is important to remember that the daily weather cannot be blamed on anyone, and any anger with the weather should not be taken out on poor, innocent college students who just want to participate in a television show. I also learned that I probably should have gone to college in a warmer, sunnier state and that Minnesota should not be on my list of places to live after graduation.

— ***Being John Malkovich***

Try to find a new perspective through which to view the show. For three years, I watched as the same shots, the same show format, the same everything were used. The show always featured three hosts, and they always talked two at a time. The hosts always discussed three films during each episode. There was always one camera that showed the two hosts together, and then two other cameras got single shots of the hosts. This was the *Take Two* format, and I had come to expect it each and every week. However, my perception changed after working on a different television show.

During the summer before my reign as producer of *Take Two*, I was a production assistant at a local news channel. I ran cameras during the three evening newscasts, and I learned many valuable tips from my time at the station. Although *Take Two* is nothing like

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a news show, I was able to take some of my experiences at the station and incorporate them into *Take Two* to provide a slightly different format for viewers.

One change I adopted during the fall semester was the camera push. Instead of having a camera rest on someone in the same still shot, I would have the camera operators zoom out to show two hosts. Then, while the camera was hot, I would have the operator zoom in until only one host was visible on camera. While this is not exactly revolutionary in the television industry, it was definitely a change to *Take Two*. This provided the camera operators with more of a job to do than just standing near a camera, ensuring that the hosts were framed properly. While some of the pushes were not what I would call stellar, they added a visual element to the show that had not previously been there. Also, the camera movement certainly had to be entertaining for the viewer who could laugh anytime the camera operator did not keep the appropriate person entirely in the shot.

I was a little more adventurous in the spring semester when I opted to have four hosts on the program. Also, I did away with the three segments with two hosts each format, and I opted to create a segment known affectionately as "the Roundtable." Four hosts would discuss one movie or several movies, and the discussion would be a free for all. I was very proud of this, and I think it added something new to the show. The group discussion was more favorable to differences of opinions among hosts, and the show was livelier during the discussion segments. Also, more movies could be addressed with the new segment than if the old format remained. Each host could mention one or two films pertaining to the theme of the week, and the hosts could discuss whichever films caught

their interest. I was very pleased with how this new reviewing format turned out, and I hope that the next producer keeps the idea for next year.

As part of my *Take Two* makeover, I also tried to establish more of an opening than just fading up the cameras on two hosts. The two hosts would then introduce the show topic and films to be discussed. During the spring semester I had one host read a prepared voiceover which revealed to viewers the titles of the films to be reviewed and the theme of the program. During editing, I would put clips of the films mentioned under the voiceover, or I would use different titles on the screen. Then I would begin the show with an establishing working shot of the studio, which would show cameras and the camera operators before panning to the hosts. My original hope at the beginning of the school year was to have a pretaped, prepared opening that could be shown each and every week. The opening would be a slick, finely edited piece of videotape that would be the same every week. The opening was supposed to give *Take Two* a bit more of a professional look, but, unfortunately, I just could not find the time to create something like that. In order to fill time some weeks, I would quickly produce a ten second opening with music and perhaps some moving graphics and clips. As my time became more and more limited, the openings did not always find their way onto the show.

Innovation is important to television, and I tried to spice up *Take Two* in the small ways that I could. I integrated the knowledge I gained over the summer into the show during the fall semester, and I think the changes were successful. For the spring semester, I experimented with the format of the show, and the results were positive. If I had had more time I would have tried some other changes, but I feel I did the best I could with the

time and staff at my disposal. Looking at the show from a different perspective can assist in creating some new changes that can benefit the program.

Apocalypse Now

I never thought it could happen to me. I was always so careful to write my project name in the editing schedule book, and I always used the same name when I created a new project. Regardless of my precautions and adherence to the rules, the unthinkable happened. My project was deleted from the editing computer I was using. Although the episode of *Take Two* I was editing was far from finished, I had already spent several hours putting the footage into the computer and organizing it. Finding out that my project, not to mention my time, was gone was like a cold glass of water in the face.

On that fateful day, I was confused and surprised when I opened my project on the computer. The footage was no longer in my folder. I talked to the media lab employee to see if perhaps the computer was not recognizing a drive or if there was some sort of other technical error. She looked at the computer, and then she did some more investigating. There had been no technical error; it was a human mistake that erased my project. There had been miscommunication as to which projects of mine could be erased, and that particular episode was caught in the confusion. When the realization hit me that I no longer had the footage in the computer, I was speechless. I did not know how to react because there was nothing I could do to bring the already edited footage back to the computer. I took a minute to come to terms with what I would have to do, and then I just started from square one.

While very important advice is to follow the sign up procedures for the media lab, that is not what I learned from this incident. I learned that sometimes things happen that are completely out of your control. I had done nothing to deserve the deletion of my project, but mistakes happen. Unfortunately for me, that mistake meant lost time, which is a very precious resource. I recovered quickly, and I immediately started reentering the same footage in the computer. There was no point crying over lost footage because crying would not bring it back. Of course I was incredibly frustrated, but I had no choice but to keep going. The show needed to be edited, and I was the one responsible for the show. Even in the face of major setbacks, the important idea is to keep moving forward. Take a minute to collect yourself, but then just jump back into the mix.

Fight Club

In the early years of my involvement in *Take Two*, we had to share the same studio as the *NewsCenter* crew. During those years, they did an early evening show, and they also had a later evening show. The *Take Two* crew would have to use the studio from the time that *NewsCenter*'s early evening post-show meeting wrapped to about a half hour before the later show began. Often we would be pressed for time to get every segment filmed. This type of scheduling strained the relationship between the crews of *Take Two* and *NewsCenter*. Both groups were trying to produce television shows, and the studio became very territorial. *NewsCenter* would need to use the computers to type in their scripts for the upcoming shows, but *Take Two* needed the teleprompter for the show it was currently taping. For my junior year, *Take Two* moved to Studio C, where we shared space

with *BSU Late Night*. Fortunately, *Take Two* taped one night, and *BSU Late Night* taped another night. Our crew no longer had to fight for space and time in a studio.

During my senior year, a major push was made to incorporate the three main television shows of WCRH into a station community. I thought this was a wonderful idea since I had always been very disappointed any time difficulties arose between staffs. I do not like conflict, and I try to avoid it whenever I can. Trying to make the separate television shows into more of a station of shows was an idea that I could wholeheartedly support. Finding others to support it was a difficult challenge, though.

Different events were planned and coordinated to give WCRH a chance to promote itself as a station. The station had a booth at Ball State's UniverCity, and here we aired episodes from the different shows to give visitors a chance to see what they might be missing. We also had fliers to pass out, and these papers gave information about the shows and a schedule of airtime. I know that I put in some time at the booth, talking to people and trying to talk up the shows. I also saw different people from the different shows there, and it seemed like the station was really pulling together. We even had T-shirts with the main three shows listed on the backs.

Another activity that combined the three main shows was the fall homecoming parade. Members of *BSU Late Night*, *NewsCenter*, and *Take Two* marched together with signs promoting WCRH collectively and not just advertising individual shows. While members of each show walked together in small clusters, the combined efforts of the shows was something I had never seen before. Before UniverCity and the parade, I had never been involved in any combined social or promotional activity with WCRH. There

had never been one to get involved with before this past year. I thought the relationships between shows would vastly improve from my freshman and sophomore years at *Take Two*.

While I certainly felt more of a community experience, the members of my staff did not. This section does not have any advice, but rather it presents my unscientific research about relations between student shows. For whatever reason, my staff would make negative comments about the other student produced shows. This is nothing I passed on to them as I have nothing but respect and admiration for the other television shows on WCRH. I often saw *NewsCenter*'s news director rushing around the TCOM building before show time in order to finalize details. I saw *BSU Late Night*'s staff working constantly in the media lab, trying to create funny and original packages. I could appreciate what these crew members were doing because I was trying to do similar things with *Take Two*. I still do not understand how freshmen with limited knowledge of production could unapologetically insult another show. There is no excuse for this, and I was ashamed every time I heard anything negative about another show coming from a member of my staff. I tried to tell the crew of *Take Two* that there was no reason for the negativity, but I do not think I got through to any of them. Is this rivalry ingrained before any actual conflict occurs or could I have done something more to create better relations among shows?

The animosity is one aspect of the show that I feel I had no control over, and it existed without any input or encouragement from me. The only advice I can give for this is to simply keep trying to promote good relations with the other television shows' staff

members. Perhaps the negativity can be rooted out and the shows will exist in a relatively peaceful environment.

Office Space

I never felt more like a TCOM student than during the fall semester. Besides my responsibilities with *Take Two*, I was taking two production courses that were very demanding. I always seemed to have a camera checked out to tape one project or another, and I scheduled myself for editing time on a daily basis. For me, this was the best part of being a telecommunications major. Having a camera bag almost constantly on my shoulder made me feel like an official telecommunications student. I was no longer sitting in a classroom listening to a professor lecture. Instead, I was taping and writing and editing. In almost all of my telecommunications classes, I heard professors say that experience was the most important part of education. This was absolutely true. I learned more by shooting commercials and other projects than by simply listening to someone talk about using a camera.

With my classes and with *Take Two*, I was being active with production elements, and I was gaining all kinds of experience. I think back to my beginning days on the Avid editing system, and I can barely believe that I used to edit so slowly. I learned to move quickly and efficiently, and I became the go-to person for questions if the media lab was closed. I was always incredibly proud of myself when someone asked me a question and I could answer it. I knew that only a year ago, I was that inexperienced student who had a vague understanding of what to do. The best part of answering other students' questions occurred when I was asked how to do something that I did not immediately know the

answer to. I had enough of a grasp on the editing system that I could figure out where to look in the general menus to find the specific operation that someone wanted to perform. This would not have been possible if I had not spent hour upon hour editing away on the show and different projects. Practice did not make perfect in this case, but practice made unbelievable progress.

Unfortunately, I had to do all of my editing this last year in the bunker of a media lab. The temporary media lab was probably in violation of a fire code with the number of people that squeezed in the one room. The TCOM building was strapped for space since every other room and studio was under construction, and the editing computers were stuffed into a room that was not designed for that purpose. I can only dream of the luxury of having an entire room designed for one person to edit privately and undisturbed. Next year's students will get to experience the reality of that dream, and they need to take advantage of those opportunities. While editing can be quite overwhelming at first, it will eventually become a very instinctual process. The times of spending five minutes making a decision about what key to press and what menu to select disappear. In place of that hesitation is a fluid motion between hands, the keyboard, and the mouse. This can only come with time, practice, and patience, and the new editing computers are calling out to be used. Put in time on the systems before having to work on anything for class, and that practice will help make your project be completed much faster and more impressively.

You've Got Mail

It seems slightly odd to stress the importance of communication to people in a telecommunications department, but I have to do it. Communication is vital to a television

show, and the best example of this point is when there was a lack of communication. I wrote earlier in the paper that the staff relied on my weekly emails to remind them of Tuesday's taping. They needed to know that I planned to tape a show, and email was the easiest way to let the staff know that I would be at the studio on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

However, the hosts did not realize that I relied on their emails as heavily as they relied on mine. I would send emails to the hosts to find out what their thoughts were on a good theme for the next week's show. Often I would not receive a response, and if I did get one, it would be an uncertain one at best. Because most of the replies were vague, I would have to wait until I talked to the hosts face to face. This limited any sort of pre-planning for the show, and I found it very frustrating that the hosts, who had a very important responsibility as the anchors of the show, would not respond or would gloss over my questions.

While the limited responses to my questions about themes was frustrating, nothing was more infuriating than showing up to a taping and finding only two or three of the four hosts there. More often than I ever thought possible, one or two of the hosts would not show up. I understand that other commitments cannot always be avoided, but I expected to receive the common courtesy of an email alerting me to and explaining the absence. If I had received the email a day or so in advance of the taping day, I could have tried to find a guest replacement host. Finding out that a host is going to be a no show five minutes before taping did not leave me with a lot of options. I had two members of the crew who were always willing to fill in, but I did not like the uncertainty of the hosts' schedules. I was always ecstatic when someone took the time to email me a message stating that they

were unavailable for that week's taping, and I was always very frustrated when I never received an email explaining an absence. Communication makes life and television producing much easier because it gives you as much information as possible. With this knowledge, a better decision can be made with regard to all aspects of production.

I wonder if I should have had a policy on attendance. Perhaps if someone missed one week's taping without any email detailing why he or she was not in attendance, that person would not be allowed to be on the air at the next week's taping. The idea of forcing someone to forfeit a show is certainly one way to emphasize the importance of proper attendance, but I had several concerns with enacting a rule like this, however. The staff of *Take Two* is very small to begin with, and telling one student that he or she could not perform on air would make the staff that much smaller. If this person was a host, I would have to find a replacement host to fill in. If the absent person had an on air segment, editing would require two to five more minutes of footage to compensate for the lack of the particular segment. By placing attendance rules on the crew, I would also be placing difficult rules on myself. I would be responsible for finding a guest host for the week or for filling more time only as a result of someone else's lack of responsibility. I was not willing to place that extra pressure on myself when a rule like the one stated above still might not encourage students to reveal their schedules to me.

In addition to the nonexistent emails from members of the *Take Two* crew, I also missed the communication between the other members of the WCRH management team. Due to my class schedule, I was unable to attend the meetings during the spring semester. The feeling of being an official, fully functioning telecommunications student disappeared

as I felt out of the WCRH loop. I tried desperately to find someone on the staff who would attend the WCRH meetings and the SAC meetings, but I think I would have had an easier job finding someone to clean my apartment every weekend. No one seemed to understand how important these meetings were, and I did not stress the importance as much as I should have. This situation became very difficult at the end of the semester because plans had to be made for the banquet, and I was finding out information about my duties much later than I should have. I thought this message would be clear without having to state it, but communication among staff members and among different organizations is essential to the production of a television show.

At some point, I managed to convince one of the people at *Take Two* to attend the management meetings, and I emailed him with the information on where the meeting was, when it was, and who would be there. He went to the WCRH and the SAC meetings, and I was very pleased that *Take Two* had been represented at both. A couple of weeks later, I emailed the same man about attending another important WCRH meeting. I gave him the time and date about a week before the actual meeting, but I did not provide him with the location. I assumed that he would realize that the future meeting was in the same studio as the last meeting. I was wrong, however, and the guy emailed me with a message about needing to know where the meeting was going to be held.

The email asking for the location of the meeting made me very upset, and I realized that having a communication breakdown is no way to accomplish anything. I was upset that the *Take Two* representative did not email me about the location until the day of the meeting. He knew about the meeting for a week, but he did not reply until the very last

minute. I was unable to respond in time, and he missed the meeting entirely. I also did not understand how he could have forgotten where the meeting was held two weeks ago. The TCOM building is not a complicated one so I do not comprehend how he could have forgotten where he was two weeks beforehand. I gave the guy some flack about his behavior with regard to the meeting, and I believe he knew that I was very upset with his actions. However, this situation occurred very near the end of the semester, and the damage had already been done.

I am willing to concede that the blame for this incident can be split. I can take some of it for not emailing a confirmation email to the crew member and making sure that he knew exactly what he was doing and where he was going. The man who chose to email me at the very last second certainly does not deserve the highest praise for his ability to take on responsibilities. Here in this situation, last-minute communication worked out poorly for *Take Two* since the show was not represented at the proper meetings. Again, the importance of timely communication is practically immeasurable, and communication can really help the outcome of a television show. .

Wayne's World

One aspect of the show of which I was immensely proud was the addition of *Take Two* to Muncie's public access channel's programming schedule. Ever since I joined the show, I have heard the possibility of having the show air on the public access station. Similarly, each year I was let down in this opportunity because previous producers never accomplished this mission. One of the main goals I set for myself when I took over the show was to have the program air on the public access channel, and I am proud to say that

I achieved this goal. My words of wisdom for this section are that things can sometimes be much easier than expected.

I was expecting to attend a major meeting with business people where I would essentially have to sell them on the idea of *Take Two*. I was thinking about what episode I could have them view and if I needed any other documents, fliers, pie charts, or any official looking papers that would influence their decision to air *Take Two*. I was considerably shocked when I made one phone call (to the wrong person, no less), and *Take Two* was added to the schedule.

I had received the name and number of a woman at Comcast from my faculty advisor, Tim Pollard, and I gave the woman a call after *Take Two* had taped its first episode. I left a message on her voicemail system, and I explained my reasons for calling, attempting to sound as professional and mature as possible. I left my home number, and after about thirty minutes or so, I received a call from the woman. She told me that she was not in charge of the scheduling, but she said that she would connect me with the person who was. In a matter of minutes, I was talking to the person at Comcast who decides what shows air and when they air. I simply stated that I was the producer of a movie review show that was run by Ball State students, and the man sounded genuinely enthusiastic about having new programming for the channel. I heard the clicking sounds of keys on a keyboard as he checked the schedule, and he explained that he had an opening on Monday and Tuesday nights for a thirty minute show. One phone call was all I had to make, and I achieved something that I had been waiting years to see happen. Getting the

show on public access was one of the simplest things I have ever done, and I was expecting something much more arduous than what actually transpired.

I wish I could say that everything I did for *Take Two* was easier than expected, but I was not that fortunate. Some days, particularly those near the end of the semester, I had to use all of my willpower to go to the tapings. The relentless winter, as expressed earlier, was particularly tough on my psyche, and my energy level bottomed out during those cold, snowy weeks. November will go down in senior year lore as the month I did not sleep because I had project after project due. The workload from my classes and *Take Two* forced me to live on about three hours of sleep every night for about a month. Not coincidentally, November was also the month that coffee became my beverage of choice. Throughout the entire year, I had to adapt to broken cameras, absent hosts, and apathetic crew members. There were many difficult moments, but the campaign to have *Take Two* air on the Muncie public access channel was not one of those. This was a shining moment of optimism and triumph, and I am proud that I stepped up to the plate expecting something much more challenging than what I actually faced.

Great Expectations

I have always thought the best art gallery display would intersperse blank canvases among the artist's paintings. In this situation, even the more abstract and modern paintings, like a solid red canvas or a painting of a square, would seem more artistic. The artist chose to place something on a white canvas, and he or she wants to share that picture with the world. Even with a more traditional painting, like a landscape or a portrait, the placement of a blank canvas next to the work of art would only highlight the talents of the

artist. Audiences would see the before and after of the artist's work, and that transformation would be an amazing site to see.

I like to apply this same theory to television, and I think it is highly appropriate in my dissection of my experiences with *Take Two*. *Take Two* is the painting hanging next to the blank canvas of static. Without *Take Two*, audiences would see snow in its place on the television. When I first started the year as producer, director, and editor of the show, I wanted *Take Two* to be the Monet, Rembrandt, and Picasso of student produced television shows. I had tremendous hopes for what I could accomplish with the show throughout my time as executive producer. In certain aspects, I achieved masterpiece status. When comparing some of the better episodes of *Take Two* to a half-hour of static, the talents of my staff are abundantly clear and obvious. The hosts love movies, and they want to share that passion with the audience. Through some of the decisions I made, I am pleased to say that the show now airs on public access. I am also excited to state that I survived the semester without an ulcer, which was no small feat. These accomplishments are quite impressive when compared to the static that would have been in *Take Two*'s place.

Even when looking at the less inventive episodes of *Take Two*, they are still small successes. The episodes that are the equivalent of a painting of a triangle still express ideas and opinions, and they are still the end product of a lot of work from a lot of different people. Regardless of the problems, concerns, and different interpretations of the show, *Take Two* still left a mark on the student production world. I only hope that the advice I have dispensed in this paper will help others interested in television production create the masterpiece that they want to share with the viewing public.